

Letter Urges President to Support Gulf Coast Recovery

June 11, 2008

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"The President stood in Jackson Square three years ago and promised to rebuild the Gulf Coast bigger and better than ever," said Rep. Melancon. "Now he is threatening to veto a bill that would provide critical funding for levees, criminal justice needs, health care and housing for extremely low-income hurricane survivors, including seniors and those with disabilities. He claims this domestic spending is 'excessive,' all the while asking Congress to send another \$160 billion to Iraq. We need to be investing in the needs of this country, including the ongoing hurricane recovery efforts along the Gulf Coast, and I urge the President to reconsider his veto threat."

Below is Rep. Melancon's letter to the President.

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June 11, 2008

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In the roughly 34 months since Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Louisiana, our state has overcome seemingly insurmountable odds and extensive devastation to rebuild better, smarter and stronger. I am so proud of the courage and determination the people of Louisiana have shown over the last three years. In what will surely be recorded as one of the largest rebuilding

projects in the history of our country, the people of Louisiana have drawn up their will to recover and move forward. As a result, our state has seen tremendous progress and improvements to our communities, schools and infrastructure.

These accomplishments wouldn't be possible without the patience and generosity of the American public. Through several emergency supplemental appropriations bills, Congress has provided billions of dollars in desperately needed funds to address the Gulf Coast recovery. The sheer scope of this catastrophe has changed the way we look at disaster recovery and how our country should prepare. Without full cooperation between all levels of government - local, state and federal - our Louisiana revival will be impossible.

It is in this spirit that I write to urge your support for several critical provisions included in the Senate amendments to the House-passed emergency supplemental appropriations bill (H.R. 2642). Funding for the following items were included in the Senate amendment: 1) Permanent Supportive Housing vouchers to shelter homeless senior and disabled persons, 2) 100 year flood protection for the New Orleans metropolitan area at historic cost share and extended repayment terms, 3) moving businesses from the recently closed Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet, 4) Mississippi River dredging and repair of flood protection projects that were critically damaged by recent flooding, 5) language directing the Corps to develop plans for permanent pumping of storm water in the New Orleans metropolitan area, taking into account the operational challenges that arise during major storms, 6) criminal justice needs along the Gulf Coast, and 7) hospitals in Louisiana and Mississippi that suffered losses due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and have worked tirelessly to deliver healthcare to our recovering coastal communities.

Your speech at Jackson Square on September 15, 2005, gave tremendous hope to a city that was "nearly empty, still partly under water, and waiting for life and hope to return." I took the promise that "we will do what it takes, we will stay as long as it takes, to help citizens rebuild their communities and their lives" very seriously, and I intend to stay the course until that commitment is met.

I commend Whip Clyburn, Speaker Pelosi and our House colleagues for their continued attention to these issues. And I thank Sens. Landrieu, Cochran and Byrd as well as their Senate Leadership for their dedication as well. As we finish negotiations on what will likely be the final emergency supplemental appropriations bill of this Congress and your presidency, I respectfully request that you keep the Gulf Coast recovery in sharp focus and support these efforts to make our states whole, vibrant and prosperous.

Sincerely,

Charlie Melancon
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Bobby Jindal, Governor, Louisiana
General Douglas Odell, Coordinator of Federal Support for the Recovery and Rebuilding of the

Gulf Coast